

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

By C. S. Lewis
Dramatized by Adrian Mitchell

Synopsis

Recommended for
everyone age 5
and older

To escape the bombs of the Nazi Blitz on London, the Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, are sent to live with a professor in the country. Once there, Lucy, exploring an old wardrobe filled with fur coats, realizes that she has walked into another world—a world where it is always winter but never Christmas. This is Narnia. Confused and afraid, she stumbles across a kindly faun who shows her the way back to the wardrobe. When she returns to the manor, no one believes her story, until Edmund happens into Narnia himself.

Edmund finds himself faced with the White Witch, the woman who claims to be queen and who wants to kill the Pevensie children before they can fulfill the prophecy that says the thrones of Narnia are rightfully theirs. The Witch tricks Edmund into believing that she is good and that the creatures of her land are plotting against her. She convinces him to bring his siblings to Narnia so that she can crown them kings and queens.

Returning to Narnia, Lucy takes her siblings to meet her friend, the faun, only to discover that the Witch has arrested him. Not ones to let a friend down, they decide to stay in Narnia long enough to save the faun. Edmund, profoundly sorry for his mistaken trust in the Witch, rejoins his brother and sisters in the fight against her. With the help of Aslan, the Lion King, and the good creatures of Narnia, they vanquish the Witch and her minions. Aslan crowns the children kings and queens of Narnia. Together they rule in peace and fairness for many years, until they happen upon the wardrobe again and step back into England—where time has not passed.

RESOURCE LIST

Prepared by J. T. Isch, Pierce County Library System

FOR CHILDREN

The Book of Three

Lloyd Alexander

The Wizard of Oz

Frank Baum

The Secret Garden

Frances Hodgson Burnett

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Roald Dahl

Beauty

Robin McKinley

The Enchanted Castle

E. Nesbit

Bed-knob and Broomstick

Mary Norton

Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson

Around the World in Eighty Days

Jules Verne

SPOTLIGHT

Over Sea, Under Stone

Susan Cooper

The three Drew children are excited about spending a holiday in Cornwall with their Great-Uncle Merry. But Great-Uncle Merry isn't quite what he seems, and when they discover an ancient map in the house, they find themselves in a dangerous battle between good and evil.

FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS

The Land of Narnia

Brian Sibley

Lord of the Rings

J. R. R. Tolkien

The Neverending Story

Michael Ende

SPOTLIGHT

Touch Magic: Fantasy, Faerie & Folklore in the Literature of Childhood

Jane Yolen

Jane Yolen is a well-known storyteller, poet, playwright, and the author of over 200 books for children and adults. In this collection of essays she explores the many aspects of fantasy literature and how it can be used to enrich children's lives.

SAVING THE CHILDREN

THE REAL-WORLD HISTORY BEHIND
THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

England, 1939—news of the Nazi invasion of Poland on the first of September, and its subsequent occupation before the month was over, hit the British people hard. Hitler's army would go on to conquer Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, most of Russia, and almost all of North Africa. They would systematically murder over six million Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and others who did not fit into what Hitler believed would be a thousand-year "Reich," or kingdom.

Hitler's *Luftwaffe*, or air force, attacked across the seas and mountains, distances that had formerly kept Britain's people feeling safe. Britain, struggling to protect her children from air attack on London and major industrial areas, evacuated them to the country. As the London newspaper *The Daily Mail* reported on September 3, 1939:



In 1939, young British children practiced wearing gas masks to protect themselves from an air attack using poison gas. Photo from In the Shadow of War by Robert Kee.



British children preparing to leave London for the country in 1939. Photo from In the Shadow of War by Robert Kee.

THE greatest organized movement of a human population in the world's history started yesterday. Nearly 1,000,000 children were taken from danger across the invisible frontier to safety. Thousands of households all over Britain yesterday welcomed small strangers who were to be for a time members of the family...

All over London boys and girls made their way to their schools for the great adventure. Each had a label tied to the coat, and was given a gas mask and a supply of food for the journey...

By tens, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, the children started off to their unknown destinations. From every school filed a procession of boys and girls, each led by a master or other official wearing an armband.

[Armband]. They filed through the streets to an underground railway station, where they took their places in an empty train, which set off at once.

As it was, crossing the "invisible frontier to safety" was not so easy. Some of the air raid shelters in Britain turned out to be death traps when their

concrete roofs collapsed on those taking refuge. Because the Nazi airplanes did not come as soon as expected, almost half of the 1,000,000 lonely and homesick children who had been evacuated returned to their urban homes. Soon after, Britain's major cities faced the ferocious air attack, known as The Blitz (the German word for a flash of lightning), which reached its height in the summer of 1940. Also, on September 17, 1940, a German U-boat (submarine) sank an evacuation ship en route to Canada, killing 77 children. That attack put an end to all civilian evacuations by ship. Though Britain avoided the catastrophic levels of suffering and death that came to so many nations during World War II, before it was over 60,000 people in Britain had been killed.

ACTIVITY

• With your class, find a story of a family separated by war. Try to chronicle what happened to them and how they survived. Your students may be able to do this by talking to people they know—it may have happened to people in their own families. If not, the following web sites have both audio records and written stories from people fleeing wars today.

<http://www.refugees.org/field/listen.htm>

<http://www.refugees.org/field/testimony/testimonymain.htm>



E A L R S

WRITING—write for a purpose

COMMUNICATION—work in a group

SOCIAL STUDIES—analyze and synthesize; investigate



The Lion, the Witch and Other Creatures of Myth and Legend



CENTAURS—Half-horse, half-man children of the hero Ixion and a cloud-goddess. They fight savagely, but can attain great wisdom. From the painting “Minerva and the Centaur” by Sandro Botticelli.

When Lucy first walks through the wardrobe into Narnia, the faun, Mr. Tumnus, drops his parcels in surprise—a reaction explained by a book Lucy sees in his cave: *Is Man a Myth?* In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, both humans and Narnians must piece together stories and legends to figure out what kind of creatures they are dealing with—and whether they are good or evil. To create the creatures of Narnia, C. S. Lewis wove his Christian beliefs together with figures he adapted from different traditions of mythology and folklore:

THE LION (ASLAN): “Aslan” means “lion” in Turkish, and “As” means “god” in the language of the Vikings. Legends often equate the lion’s mane with the rays of the sun or the crown of a king. The title “king of beasts” also has roots in fact—lions are often the top predator in their natural habitats. But in the Middle Ages the lion also stood for resurrection. People thought lions were born dead, then were brought to life by the breath of their mothers.

THE WHITE WITCH (JADIS): Beautiful, powerful women with evil hearts appear in many stories. The closest model for Jadis (the word means “queen” in Persian) is Hans Christian Anderson’s Snow Queen, who rules a kingdom of perpetual winter and whose kiss turns hearts to ice.

FATHER CHRISTMAS: Based on St. Nicholas, a real bishop from ancient Turkey, Father Christmas evolved into a legendary gift-giver who, according to Scandinavian stories, lives with dozens of elves in the far north on top of a mountain. The mountain has three ears that enable Father Christmas to hear messages from people all over the world. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* he contrasts with the evil White Witch, who also drives a sleigh pulled by reindeer.

ACTIVITY

• Invite your students to create their own world, like the world of Narnia. What would they call it? Who lives there? What are the customs, rituals, and habits? Where do the inhabitants live? What do they eat? Ask them to imagine that they are strangers traveling through their country. Have them write down what they see, and let the rest of the class know about their world and its inhabitants by:

- Drawing pictures
- Writing the history
- Acting out a scene that takes place between the creatures
- Writing some of their language, laws, poetry, or literature

Here are some mythological models for other Narnian creatures:

FROM GREEK MYTHS:

Satyrs—Male nature spirits, with the horns and lower bodies of goats; wilder than fauns, they follow Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry.

Naiads—Nymphs, female spirits of lakes, rivers, and springs.

Dryads—Spirits of trees, who die when their tree dies.

Minotaur—A monster with a man’s body and the head of a bull; the son of Pasiphae (the wife of King Minos of Crete) and the sea-god Poseidon, who had taken the shape of a bull.

FROM NORSE MYTHS:

Giants—Huge man-like creatures that fight against the gods.

Dwarfs—or “Dvergar” live and work underground. The sun turns them into stone.

FROM FOLK TALES:

Boggles—Small, evil goblins.

Hags—Withered female witches.

Ogres—Evil giants; they first appeared in *Puss in Boots* by Charles Perrault.

- E A L R S**
- COMMUNICATION**—listen and observe; communicate clearly
 - ARTS**—communicate; connect
 - WRITING**—write for a purpose

AT TOP: THE FAUN—Fauns are nature spirits associated with the ancient Greek god Pan (his Roman name was Faunus), who was the son of Hermes. They represent the wildness and fertility of the woods. Like Pan they appear to be half-human, with the lower torso of a deer or goat, and small horns or antlers.

TIME AND CHANGE

IN
THE LION, THE WITCH AND
THE WARDROBE

Time in Narnia, the land behind the wardrobe in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, moves strangely. The passage of the seasons has been halted; it has been winter for many years. And, even though the Pevensies spend many years in Narnia, when they return to our world it is the very same instant they left, and they have not aged at all.

Why does C. S. Lewis make Narnian time behave so strangely? The answer lies in his theological beliefs: he believed that time is a gift from God to humanity, and in order for people to find joy and eternal life, they must first accept the natural passage of time and the changes that it brings, even when those changes are painful or difficult.



By stopping time, the White Witch thinks she can control her future and remain the queen of Narnia forever. Illustration by Sally Holmes.

The evil White Witch of Narnia is the enemy of time and change. Although she cannot stop time, she desperately wants to, and so she tries to stop the changes associated with it. Instead of letting her enemies live out their normal lives she turns them into unchanging stone statues. She also tries to prevent the passage of the seasons and the festivals associated with them. As Tumnus says to Lucy, she

makes it “always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!”

Aslan, in contrast, brings spring to Narnia. He embraces change—even his own death—and therefore can also bring rebirth and life. As Mr. Beaver says, “When he bares his teeth/Winter meets its death/And when he shakes his mane—/Spring again.”

Ironically, the Witch’s struggle against change actually keeps her the prisoner of time. She can never win, only delay her defeat; even the enemies she thought would be stone forever are restored by Aslan’s breath and join the battle against her.



People’s perceptions of time and our ability to manipulate it have provided ample fodder for artists of all kinds, as seen in the famous painting “The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory” by Salvador Dali.

This battle over the seasons is but one of the differences between Narnian time and our own. As Professor Kirk explains, “however long you stay there, it never takes up any of our time.” The Pevensies spend many years in Narnia and grow up there, but when they eventually return to our world, they come back at the same moment as when they first went into Narnia. It is still 1939, and both the challenges of growing up and the horrors of World War II still lie before them. This is because Lewis intended Narnia to provide them with an opportunity to prepare for the passage of time in our world, not as an escape from it.

It is just as important to accept the difficult decisions and changes that time brings in our world as it is in Narnia. In Narnia the Pevensies learn that time can bring struggle and danger, but it can also bring a glorious new life filled with joy and hope.

ACTIVITY

• Time can certainly seem to move differently, depending on what you are doing and how much you like doing it. Push the desks to the side of the room and have the students walk around normally for 30 seconds. Now, ask them to move as slowly as possible. Have them walk this way around the room for 30 seconds; have them tell you how long they think they walked in slow motion. Repeat this with fast walking. Why does time perception change?



EALRS

COMMUNICATION—listen and observe; work in a group